

## Some students voice their anger about return to campus

CHASE GAGE  
NEWS WRITER

Within the first day of returning to campus, the opinions of a fraction of the student body were made evident to students and faculty alike as the message “Close Campus” was chalked across Arkansas State University’s sidewalks.

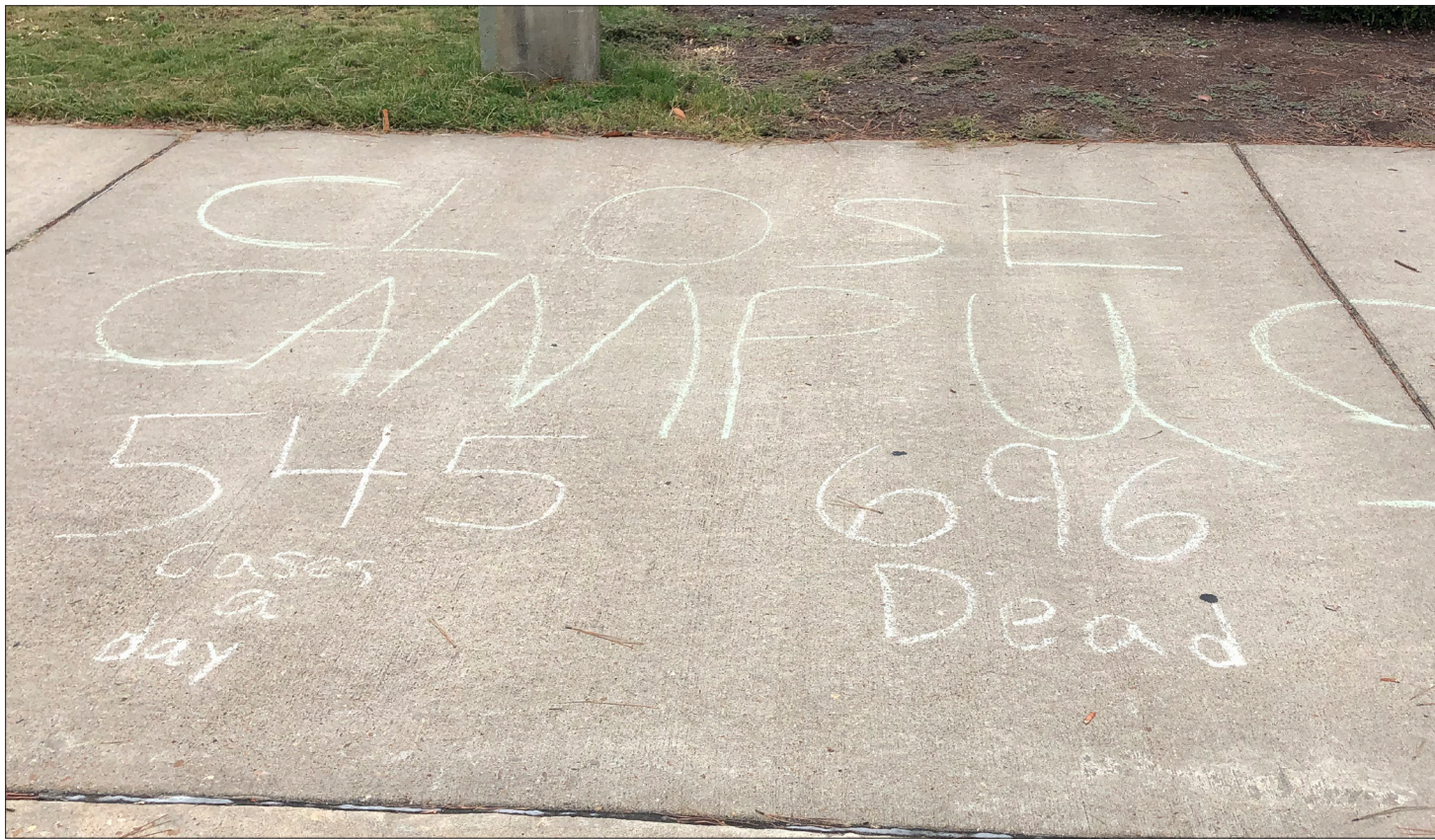
According to Chancellor Kelly Dampousse, about 20% of classes are offered fully online, while all remaining classes are either in-person or “hybrid” classes that are partially in-person and partially online.

The idea of in-person classes during a pandemic, though, does not sit well with some students.

“I think it’s pretty selfish that they would open campus so quickly,” Cynthia Herring, a vocal music major at Arkansas State from Minot, North Dakota, said. “I just find it strange that they’re opening back up when numbers are going up. I feel like if they valued our health and safety, they would keep campus closed.”

When strolling through campus the first few days of classes, the chalked sidewalks reporting COVID-19 cases and deaths in Arkansas were hard to miss. Every few steps, those walking from the student union to the lab sciences buildings are reminded of the grim reality of the current situation outside the campus borders.

According to the official Arkansas State Campus COVID-19 Report, there were 56 total active cases as of Tuesday. Of those 56, 55 were students, with 45 of those living off-campus. Just 10 students living on campus



Some students on campus were not happy with returning. Chalk messages were spread throughout campus calling for a closing.

currently have active cases, as well as one vendor. All active cases are said to be in isolation.

These numbers are slightly higher than those of other major universities within the state when considering total enrollment.

The University of Arkansas has reported 52 active cases, while the University of Central Arkansas has reported just 23 cumulative cases since March.

Though those numbers may seem low, all three universities made the switch to online classes in the spring before any cases were reported in the state.

“The switch to online in the spring was difficult, but they’ve bragged about how we’re equipped to move back to online in case everything gets shut down again,” Herring



Messages like this were common throughout campus.

said. “But if they’re expecting to get shut back down, why did they re-open in the first place? While they are putting out these precautions and guidelines to keep us ‘safe’, I still feel it’s not enough. There are going to

be people getting sick. Students are going to be hospitalized.”

The university requires masks to be worn while on campus, but, according to first-hand observers, many aren’t taking the mandate seriously. When

currently quarantined in his dorm after self-reporting contact with an individual with a suspected COVID case.

Moore said he’s yet to be in a class with proper distancing and that he’s typically within three feet of another student. He also supported claims that several students are not wearing masks properly while on campus.

“What about the people with no symptoms? What about students that live with their parents? They shouldn’t have to worry about getting sick because our college wants to stay open for money,” Moore said.

Despite the calls to close the campus, however, not all students are on the same page. Some students are comfortable with the re-opening and believe the right decisions have been made.

One such student, Nathan Luyet, a senior creative media production major from Bigelow, said the whole situation is overblown, and that Arkansas State should have never shut down in the first place.

“I don’t think we should have locked down in the beginning. If we’re going to freak out like this, then we should freak out about the flu every year,” Luyet said. “I definitely get more out of an in-person class, and I feel like if we’re going to be paying as much as we are, I wish it was all in person.”

Moore did provide one suggestion as to how the university could stay open while also protecting the health of students.

“The only viable way to safely reopen is to have the roof torn off,” Moore said.

*This story also ran in the Sept. 2 edition of the Jonesboro Sun.*

Photo by: Krishnan Collins | Editor-in-Chief

asked, both Herring and Kelley Fiesser, a sophomore English major from Maynard, said they’ve seen several students either not wearing masks, or wearing them improperly.

Per Arkansas State policy, though, masks are required at all times, even while socially distanced in classrooms.

“I think it’s crazy that we opened back up,” Fiesser said. “I personally think the school should close, even though there are many people — myself included — who learn more efficiently on campus.”

Christopher Moore, a freshman Computer Science major from Jonesboro, said the steps the university has taken to prevent an outbreak are “unrealistic.” Moore is

### QUARANTINE, CONTINUED

The Camden native said she wishes she would have bought a planner and markers before going into quarantine not necessarily because she needs it, but because it would give her something extra to do.

Fife is part of Active Minds on campus.

Active Minds is a student organization that helps raise awareness about mental health among college students.

Fife noted how important it is to keep track of mental health while a student is in quarantine.

“Quarantine and isolation are hard things to go through on your own,” Fife said. “Because of that, I think it’s important to check in on yourself during this time spent alone. There are many ways to occupy yourself with the time, but part of that should definitely be used to benefit your mental health. I have been using a lot of my time to keep up with school work, but I also have made time to call someone each day.”

Fife said making time to call someone helps you know you are not alone and it can also turn your whole day around. Fife does not stop at just a phone call.



Photo by: Sydney Watkins

Students in quarantine get sent large amounts of food.

“I also give myself time to do something I enjoy, like listening to music or watching shows on Netflix to unwind after a long day,” Fife said. “I’ve tried to also keep active, but it is hard in the confines of your room. There are tons of exercises on YouTube that are made for small spaces with walls that aren’t soundproof. It hasn’t been the same as my normal routine, but it has helped me stay motivated and feel good throughout the day.”

The counseling center currently offers more meetings for students who think they might need a little help. Active Minds also offers support and resources to

help with mental health. “Overall,” Fife said, “reaching out to someone can really help when you’re feeling alone, and there are plenty of resources here on campus to help.”

While also caring about mental health, Fife supplied a few more words of advice about quarantine.

“Be prepared,” Fife said. “Have plenty of stuff to entertain yourself with. Don’t get discouraged. It’s not as bad as it seems honestly. The first couple of days are kind of hard, but you kind of get into your groove and it’s really not that bad. Just see it through all the way and keep yourself and others safe.”

## CAMPUS CRIME

TRISTAN BENNETT

NEWS EDITOR

Aug. 14 | 10:17 AM

University Police conducted a traffic stop on a vehicle traveling with no brake lights at the intersection of Aggie Road and Melrose Street. Officers approached the driver, Brandon Burnett, 28 and asked for his driver’s license, vehicle registration and proof of insurance. Burnett was unable to present any of the documents. Officers positively identified Burnett and confirmed he was driving on a suspended license. The vehicle was not covered by liability insurance, and the registration had expired. He was issued a citation for these violations. However, upon further investigation, officers discovered an active warrant for Burnett’s arrest through the Jonesboro Police Department. He was placed into custody

and transported to the Craighead County Detention Center where he was released.

Aug. 25 | 4:21 PM

University Police arrived at 322 University Loop CIR to find a disturbance. Officers found Autumn Dildine, 23, in clear distress, ranting about multiple subjects, going from happy to sad to laughing. It became apparent to officers that she was having a mental breakdown. Dildine said she would go to her father’s house and burn the art on his walls and that she has hurt others but did not want to. Officers contacted Counseling Services and calmed her until counselors arrived. Dildine grew more agitated, so Jonesboro Police arrived and offered to take her to the Crisis Intervention Center.

She refused and attempted to leave, prompting officers to place her in handcuffs.

She was arrested for disorderly conduct and transported to the Craighead County Detention Center.

Aug. 30 | 9:48 PM

University Police responded to a call of assistance from EMS concerning a combative person at 223 N. Red Wolf Blvd. Everything looked calm, but there was a man walking to the elevators with a hotel staff member. EMS told officers they responded to a call regarding someone falling.

After speaking with bar staff, officers discovered Kevin Christy had three drinks and seemed very intoxicated. He refused any medical treatment but did not get physical with EMS staff.

Hotel staff said Christy did not cause a problem in the lobby and they had no issue with him returning to his room. He was escorted by a maintenance staff member back to his room.